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Levin et al.

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(54) **MIXING SYSTEM**

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(73) Assignee: **Ford Global Technologies, LLC**, Dearborn, MI (US)

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This patent is subject to a terminal disclaimer.

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(22) Filed: **Aug. 12, 2014**

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(51) **Int. Cl.**

F01N 3/20	(2006.01)
B01F 5/04	(2006.01)
F01N 3/28	(2006.01)
B01F 5/02	(2006.01)
B01F 5/06	(2006.01)
B01F 3/04	(2006.01)
F01N 13/00	(2010.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**

CPC ***F01N 3/2892*** (2013.01); ***B01F 3/04049*** (2013.01); ***B01F 5/0268*** (2013.01); ***B01F 5/04*** (2013.01); ***B01F 5/0473*** (2013.01); ***B01F 5/0614*** (2013.01); ***F01N 13/009*** (2014.06); *B01F 2005/0636* (2013.01); *F01N 3/2066* (2013.01); *F01N 2240/20* (2013.01); *F01N 2610/02* (2013.01); *F01N 2610/146* (2013.01); *F01N 2610/1453* (2013.01)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**

CPC .. F01N 3/2066; F01N 3/2892; F01N 13/009; F01N 2240/20; F01N 2610/02; F01N 2610/1453; F01N 2610/146; B01F 3/04049; B01F 5/0268; B01F 5/04; B01F 5/0473; B01F 5/0614; B01F 2005/0636

USPC 60/324

See application file for complete search history.

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A mixing system is provided. The mixing system includes a housing defining a boundary of a mixing conduit including an expansion section with an injector mount and a reductant diverter extending into the conduit upstream of the injector mount in the expansion section. The mixing system further includes an atomizer with openings positioned in the housing and a helical mixing element positioned in the housing.

14 Claims, 7 Drawing Sheets

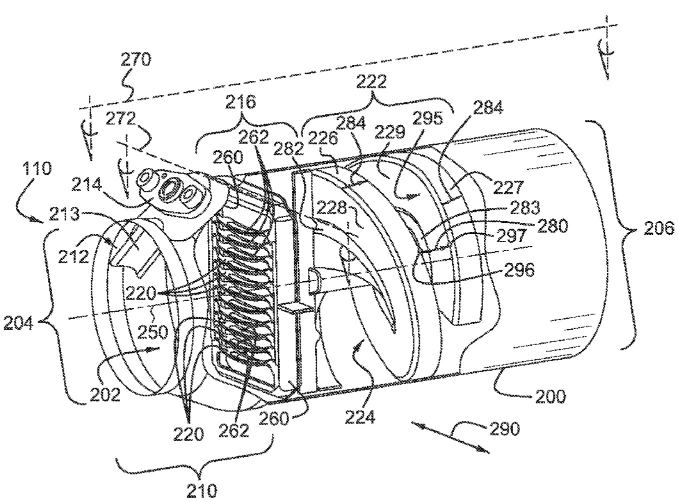

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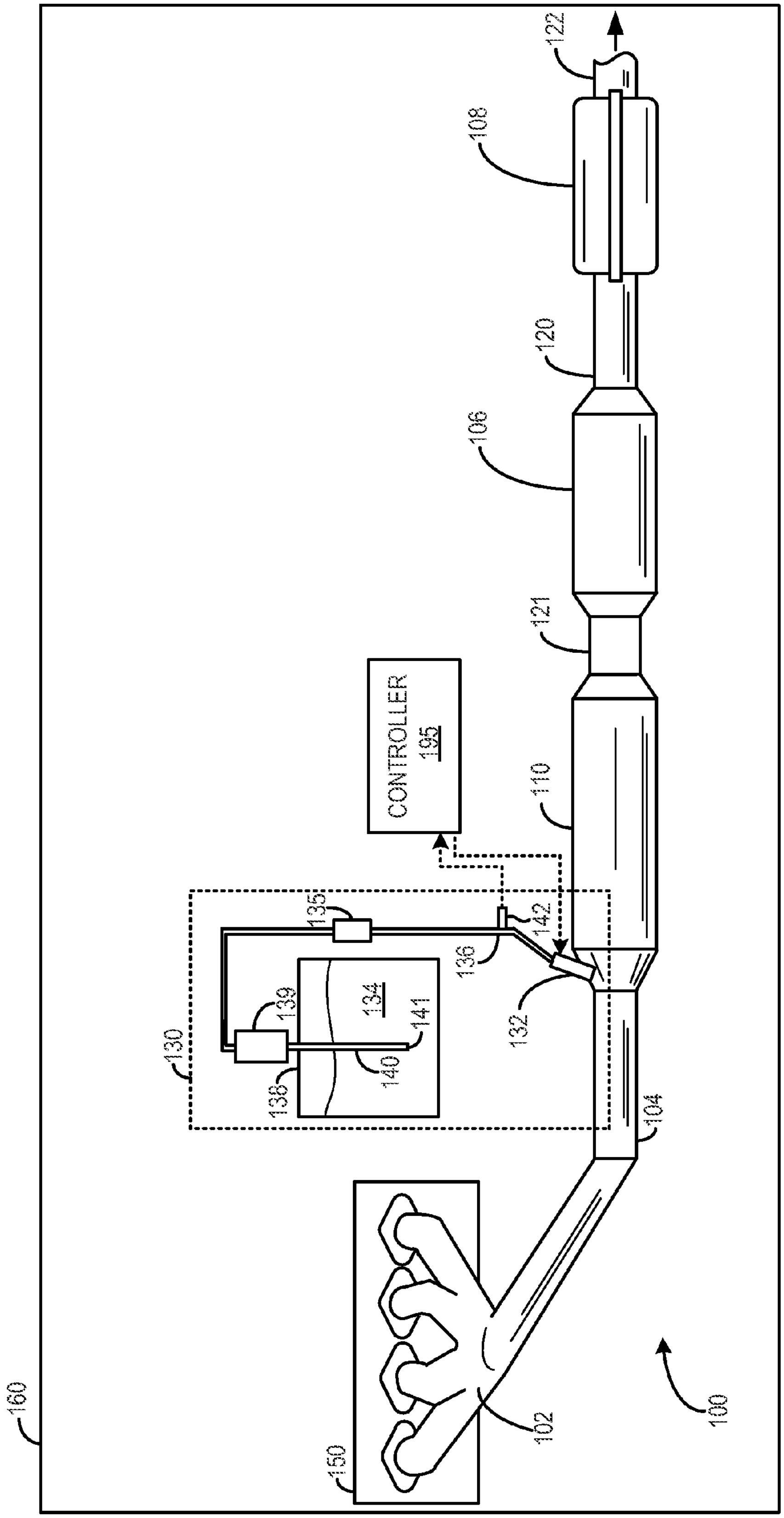
FIG. 1



CONTROLLER
195
100
102
104
106
108
110
120
121
122
130
132
134
135
136
138
139
140
141
142
150
160

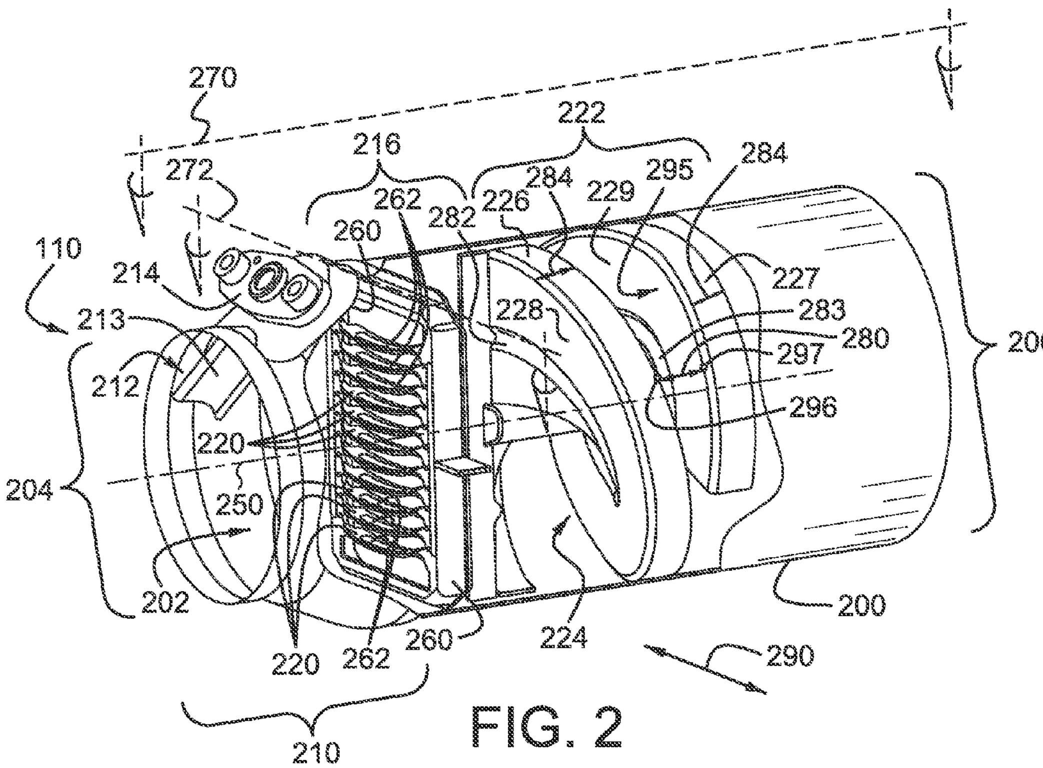

270
222
216
272
262
284
295
284
260
282
226
229
110
214
213
227
283
228
280
297
206
212
296
220
204
250
202
200
220
262
260
224
290
210

FIG. 2

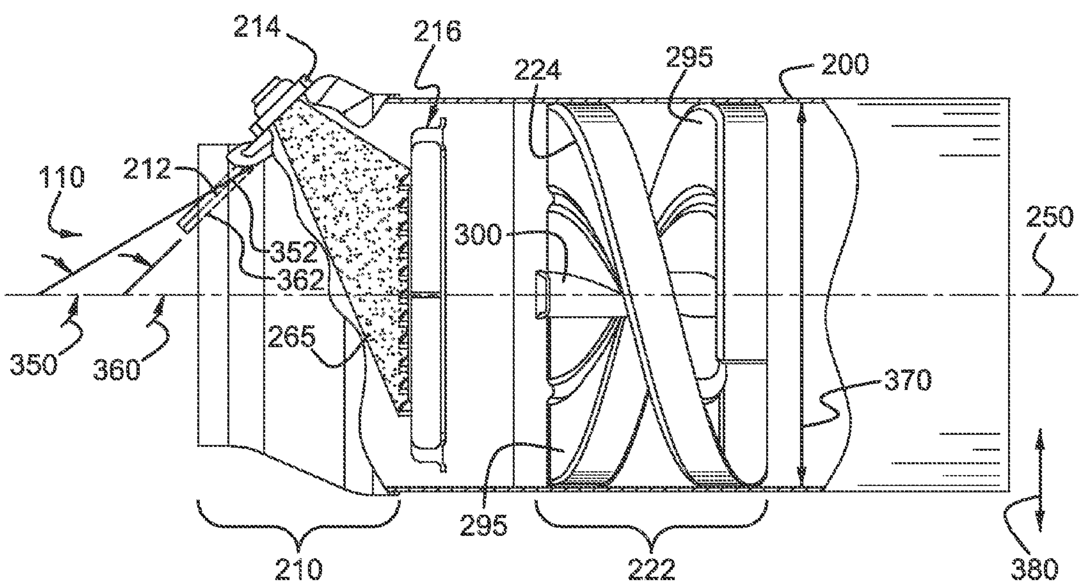

214
216
224
295
200
110
212
250
352
362
300
350
360
265
370
295
210
222
380

FIG. 3

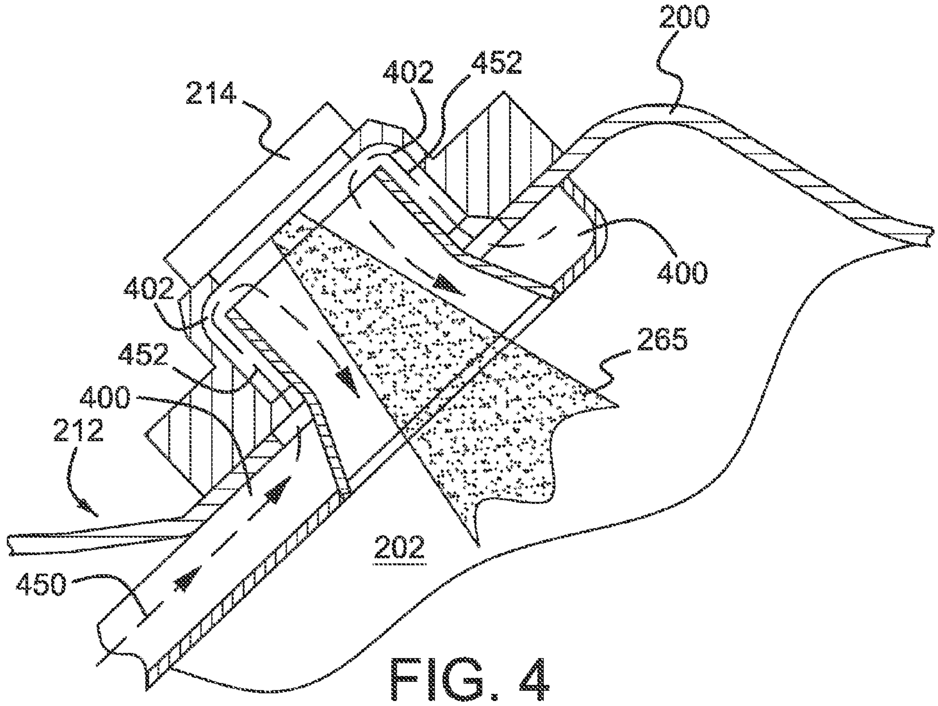

200
402
452
214
400
402
265
452
400
212
202
450

FIG. 4

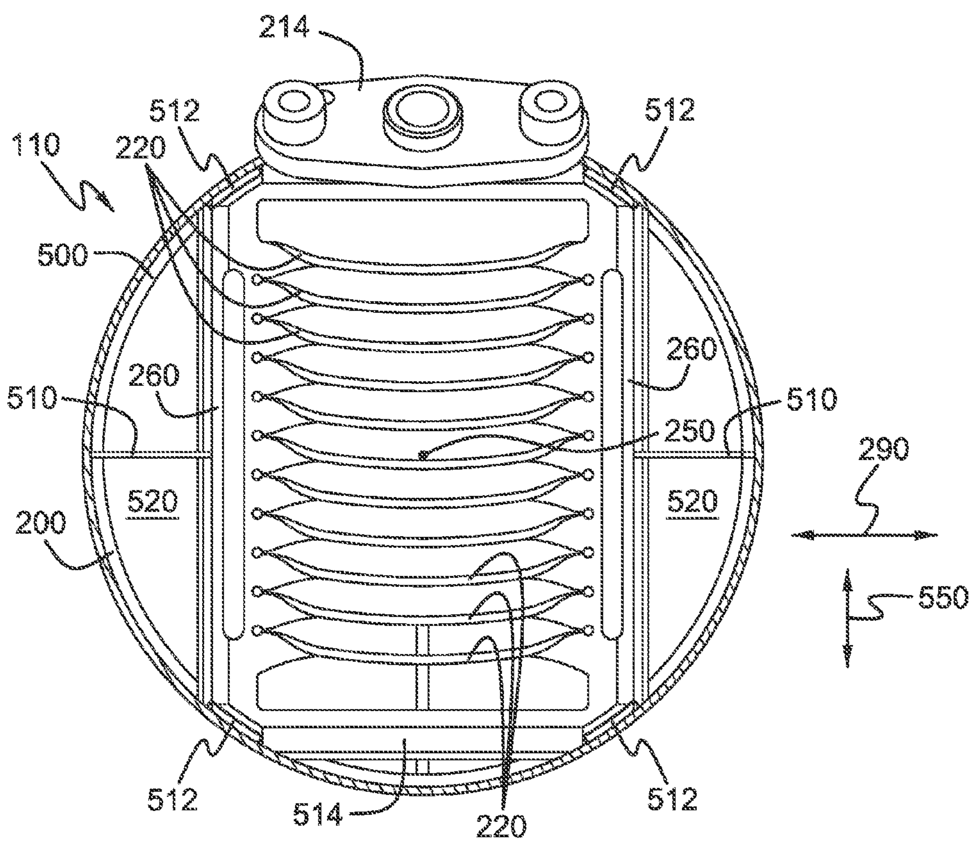

214
512
512
110
220
500
260
260
510
510
250
290
520
520
200
550
512
512
514
220

FIG. 5

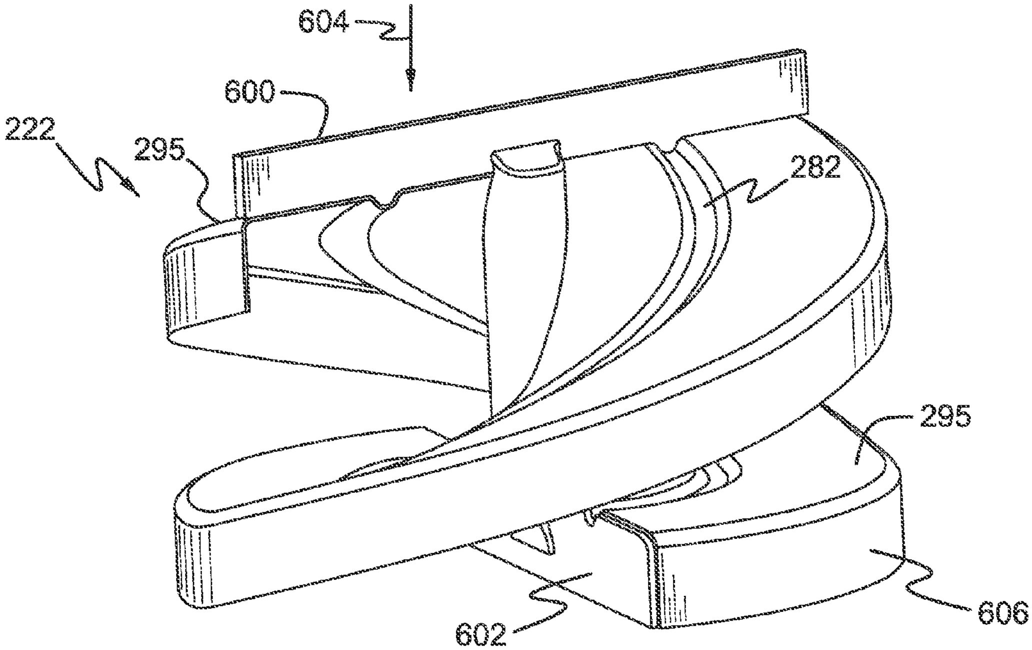


FIG. 6

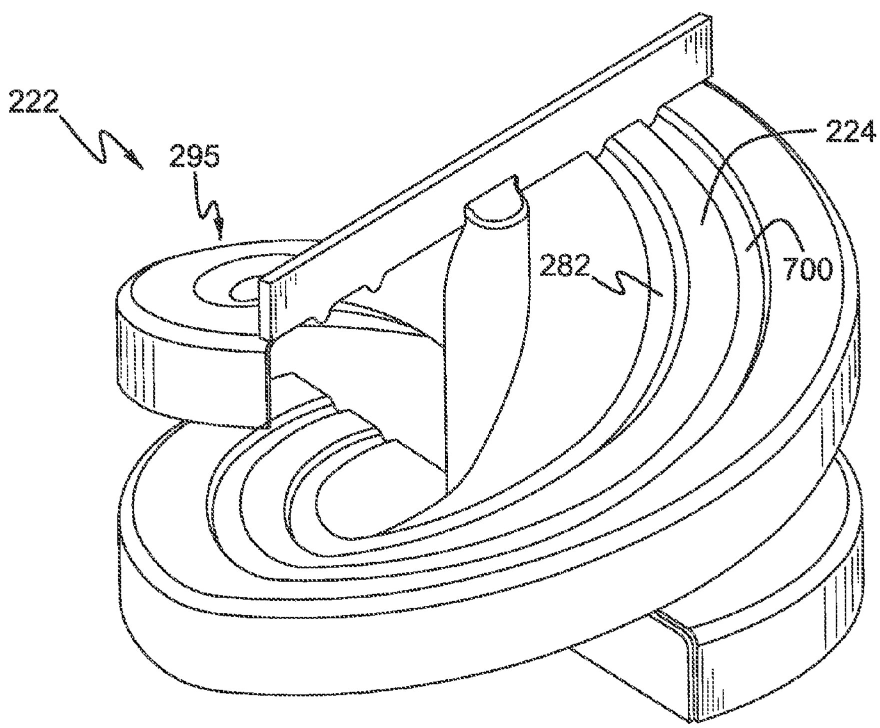


FIG. 7

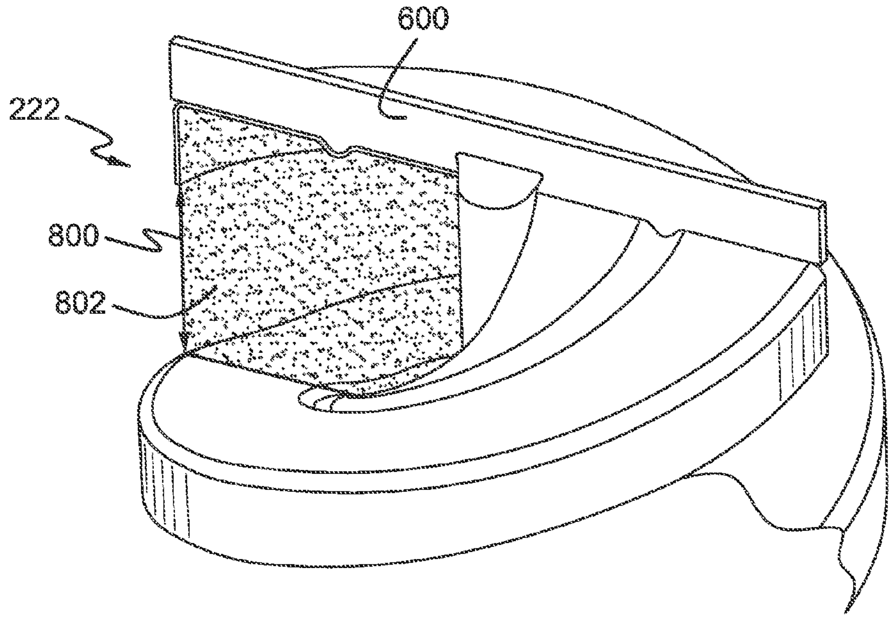


FIG. 8

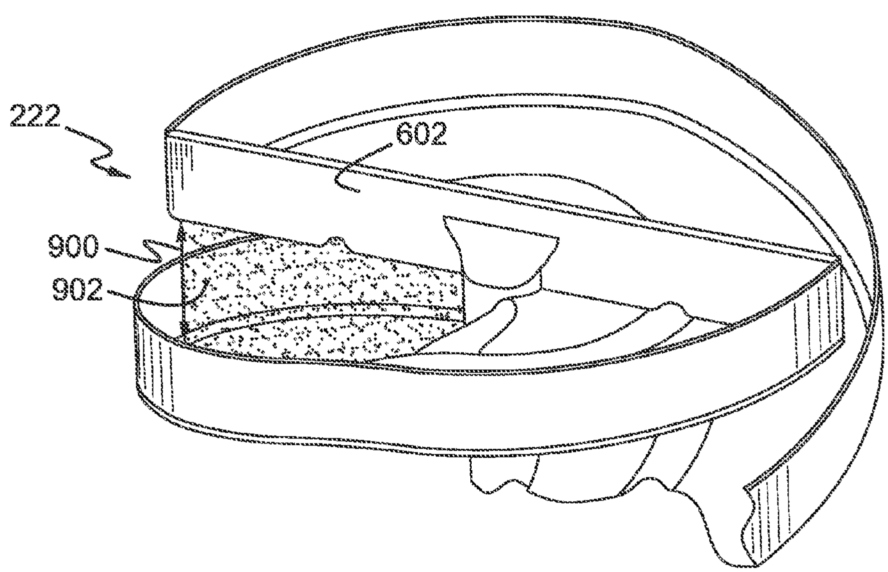
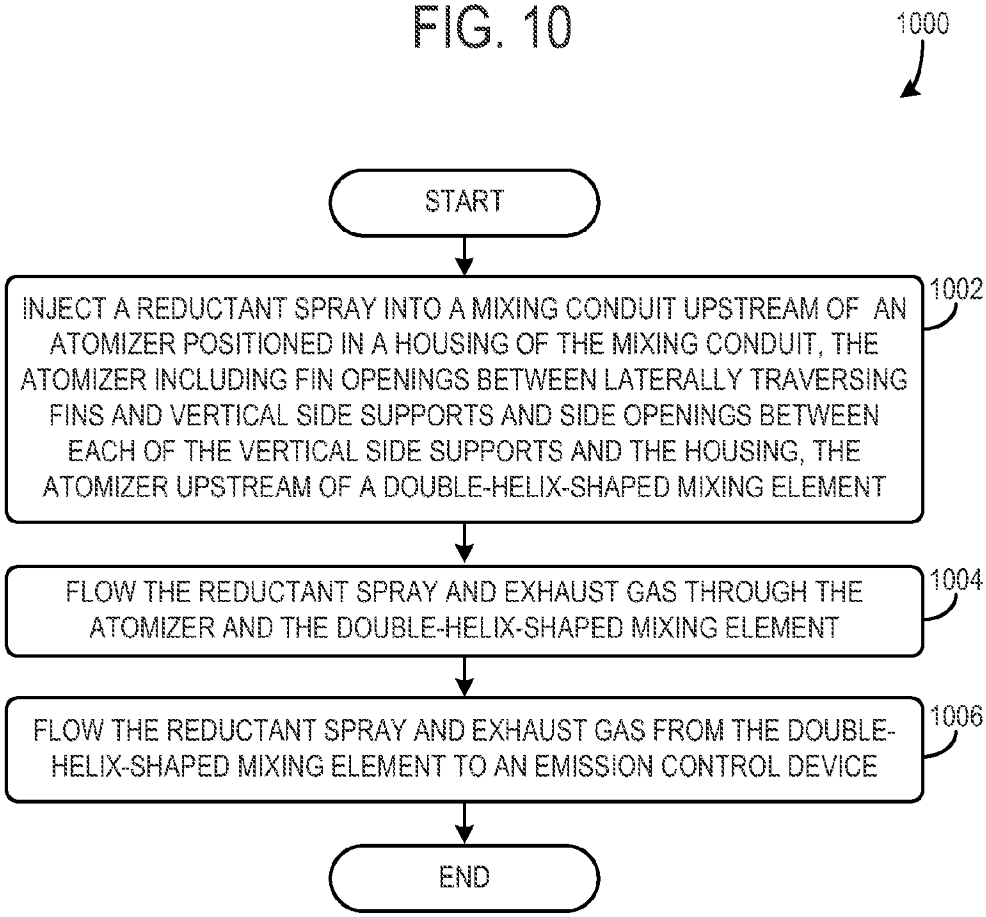


FIG. 9

FIG. 10


1000
START
INJECT A REDUCTANT SPRAY INTO A MIXING CONDUIT UPSTREAM OF AN ATOMIZER POSITIONED IN A HOUSING OF THE MIXING CONDUIT, THE ATOMIZER INCLUDING FIN OPENINGS BETWEEN LATERALLY TRAVERSING FINS AND VERTICAL SIDE SUPPORTS AND SIDE OPENINGS BETWEEN EACH OF THE VERTICAL SIDE SUPPORTS AND THE HOUSING, THE ATOMIZER UPSTREAM OF A DOUBLE-HELIX-SHAPED MIXING ELEMENT
1002
FLOW THE REDUCTANT SPRAY AND EXHAUST GAS THROUGH THE ATOMIZER AND THE DOUBLE-HELIX-SHAPED MIXING ELEMENT
1004
FLOW THE REDUCTANT SPRAY AND EXHAUST GAS FROM THE DOUBLE-HELIX-SHAPED MIXING ELEMENT TO AN EMISSION CONTROL DEVICE
1006
END

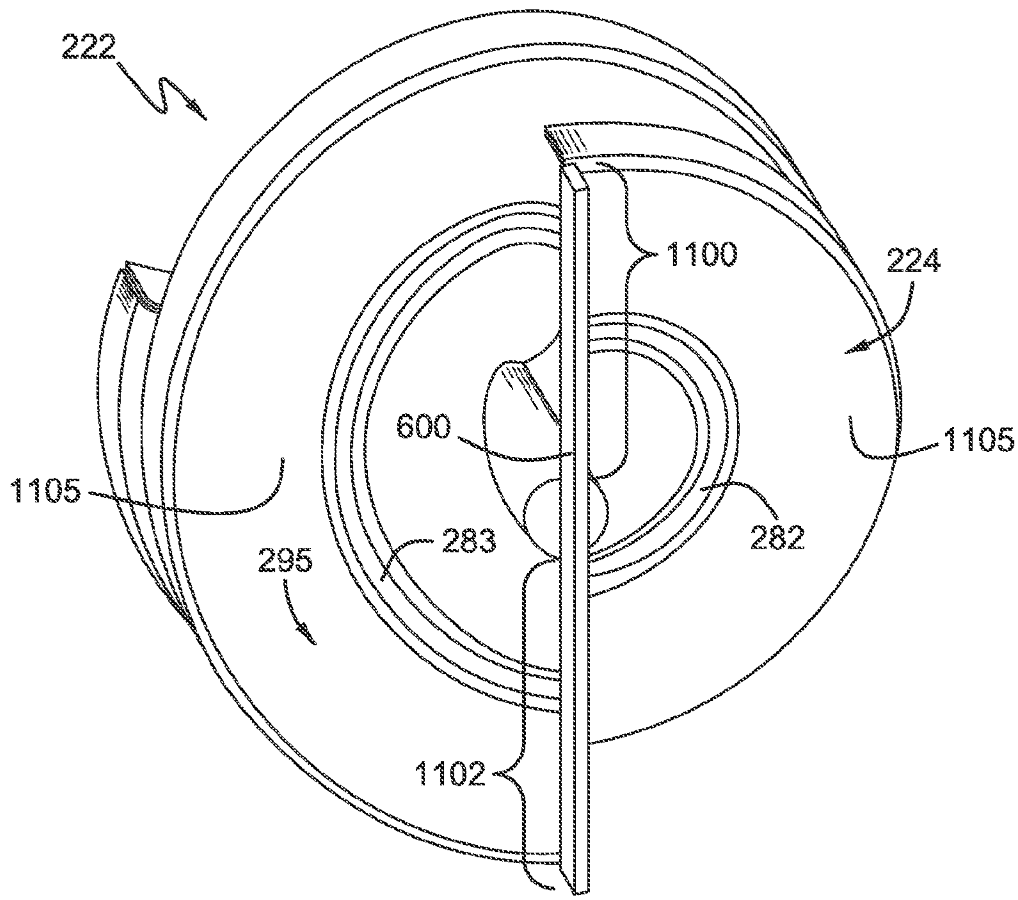


FIG. 11

MIXING SYSTEM

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

The present application claims priority to U.S. patent application Ser. No. 13/419,978, "MIXING SYSTEM," filed on Mar. 14, 2012, now U.S. Pat. No. 8,800,276, the entire contents of which are hereby incorporated by reference for all purposes.

BACKGROUND/SUMMARY

Internal combustion engines utilize emission control devices to reduce emissions from the engine. The emission control devices may be filters, catalysts, and other suitable device for removing unwanted gases, particulates, etc., from an engine exhaust stream. Some emission control devices inject reductants, such as urea or ammonia, into the exhaust system upstream of a catalyst to convert nitrogen oxides into diatomic nitrogen, water, etc., to reduce the amount of nitrogen oxides released to the atmosphere. The reductant spray and the catalyst work in conjunction to enable nitrogen oxide conversion.

To aid in nitrogen oxide conversions in the catalyst, various approaches are provide to mix the reductant spray in the exhaust stream to promote even distribution of the reductant. One approach is described in US 2010/0107614 using various mixing devices with a specific injector configuration.

The inventors herein have recognized some disadvantages of the above approach related not only to manufacturability, but also to how the various features work together in combination. In addition to packaging and manufacturability issues, the overall flow path and mixing interactions between the injector and various mixing devices along the exhaust flow path can result in unintended consequences that degrade overall atomization under certain temperature and flowrate conditions.

To address at least some of these issues, one approach provides a mixing system. The mixing system includes a housing defining a boundary of a mixing conduit including an expansion section with an injector mount and a reductant diverter extending into the conduit upstream of the injector mount in the expansion section. The mixing system further includes an atomizer with openings positioned in the housing and a helical mixing element positioned in the housing.

The atomizer may decrease the size of the reductant droplets in the exhaust stream and work in cooperation with the diverter positioned in the expansion region. Because the expansion region enables a reduction in pressure and flow velocity, the diverter takes advantage of the change in flow conditions to aid in the injector droplet mixing where the atomizer, being at the end of the expansion region in one example, can then further enhance the mixing and prepare it for entrance into the downstream helical mixing region. As a result, nitrogen oxide conversion in a catalyst positioned downstream of the mixing system may be improved. Thus, not only does the helical mixing element increase the turbulence in the exhaust gas and promote more even distribution of the reductant spray in the exhaust gas, it does so with a mixture that has been especially prepared for such an operation. It will be appreciated that the atomizer and helical mixing element work in conjunction with the expansion region and diverter to promote mixing of the reductant spray in the exhaust stream to improve operation of a downstream catalyst.

The above advantages and other advantages, and features of the present description will be readily apparent from the following Detailed Description when taken alone or in connection with the accompanying drawings.

It should be understood that the summary above is provided to introduce in simplified form a selection of concepts that are further described in the detailed description. It is not meant to identify key or essential features of the claimed subject matter, the scope of which is defined uniquely by the claims that follow the detailed description. Furthermore, the claimed subject matter is not limited to implementations that solve any disadvantages noted above or in any part of this disclosure.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE FIGURES

FIG. **1** shows a schematic depiction of a vehicle having a reductant injection system.

FIG. **2** shows an illustration of an example mixing system included in the vehicle shown in FIG. **1**.

FIG. **3** shows a cross-sectional side view of the mixing system shown in FIG. **3**.

FIG. **4** shows an expanded view of the diverter included in the mixing system shown in FIG. **3**.

FIG. **5** shows another cross-sectional view of the mixing system shown in FIG. **2**.

FIG. **6** shows an expanded view of the helical mixing element shown in FIG. **2**.

FIG. **7** shows another example helical mixing element.

FIGS. **8** and **9** show additional views of the helical mixing element shown in FIG. **6**.

FIG. **10** shows a method for operation of an exhaust system.

FIG. **11** shows the helical mixing element included in the mixing system shown in FIG. **2**.

FIGS. **2-9** and **11** are drawn approximately to scale, although modifications may be made, if desired.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

A mixing system is described including a diverter positioned upstream of a reductant injection nozzle, an atomizer positioned downstream of the diverter and the injection nozzle, and a helical mixing element positioned downstream of the atomizer. The aforementioned components of the mixing system may work in conjunction to increase turbulence of the exhaust gas and reduce the size of the reductant vapor particles in the exhaust gas to improve operation of a catalyst positioned downstream of the mixing system. In this way, engine emissions can be reduced.

FIG. **1** includes an example exhaust system for a vehicle with an engine including a reductant injection system. FIG. **2** shows an embodiment of a mixing system included in the vehicle shown in FIG. **1**. FIG. **3** shows a side view of the mixing system shown in FIG. **2**. FIG. **4** shows a side cross-sectional view of the injection in the expansion region. FIG. **5** shows details of an example atomizer, and FIGS. **6-9** and **11** show details of a double-helix-shaped mixing element. FIG. **10** includes a flow chart of an example method for operating a reductant injection system.

More specifically, FIG. **1** illustrates an exhaust system **100** for transporting exhaust gases produced by internal combustion engine **150**. As one non-limiting example, engine **150** includes a diesel engine that produces a mechanical output by combusting a mixture of air and diesel fuel. Alternatively, engine **150** may include other types of engines such as gasoline burning engines, among others. The exhaust system **100** and the engine **150** are included in a vehicle **160**.

Exhaust system **100** may includes an exhaust manifold **102** for receiving exhaust gases produced by one or more cylinders of engine **150**. An exhaust conduit **104** is in fluidic communication with the exhaust manifold **102**. A mixing system **110** is fluidically coupled to the exhaust conduit **104**. The mixing system **110** may receive liquid reductant (e.g., a liquid reductant spray) from a reductant injection system **130**. A selective catalytic reductant (SCR) catalyst **106** is arranged downstream of the mixing system **110**, and a noise suppression device **108** is arranged downstream of catalyst **106**. Note that catalyst **106** can include a variety of suitable catalysts for reducing NOx or other products of combustion resulting from the combustion of fuel by engine **150**. However, in other examples, the catalyst **106** may be another suitable emission control device.

Additionally, exhaust system **100** may include a plurality of exhaust pipes or passages to enable fluidic communication between various components, such as the catalyst **106** and the noise suppression device **108**. For example, as illustrated by FIG. **1**, an exhaust passage **120** is in fluidic communication with the catalyst **106** and the noise suppression device **108**. Additionally, exhaust passage **121** is in fluidic communication with the mixing system **110** and the catalyst **106**. Finally, exhaust gases may be permitted to flow from noise suppression device **108** to the surrounding environment via exhaust passage **122**, the flow exiting at a tailpipe. Note that while not illustrated by FIG. **1**, exhaust system **100** may include a particulate filter and/or diesel oxidation catalyst arranged upstream or downstream of catalyst **106**. Furthermore, it should be appreciated that exhaust system **100** may include two or more catalysts. Still further, it should be appreciated that some of the exhaust passages, such as exhaust passage **120** and exhaust passage **121**, may not be included in the exhaust system **100** in other examples.

In some embodiments, mixing system **110** can include a greater cross-sectional area or flow area than upstream exhaust passage **104**. Furthermore, the mixing system **110** may include a number of features that promote mixing of the reductant in the exhaust stream, thereby improving operation of the catalyst **106**, as described herein with regard to FIGS. **2**-**9** and **11**.

An injector **132** is coupled to the mixing system **110**. The injector **132** is included in the liquid reductant injection system **130**. As one non-limiting example, the liquid injected by the injector **132** may include a liquid reductant solution **134**, such as a urea solution. In one specific example, the liquid reductant solution comprises an aqueous urea and ethanol solution. In some examples, the injector **132** may have an integrated valve for regulating the flow of reducant through the injector controlled by controller **195**. However, in other examples, a separate valve may be provided upstream of the injector **132** and downstream of the filter **135** to regulate the flow of reducant through the injector **132**.

The liquid reductant solution **134** may be supplied to injector **132** through a conduit **136** from a storage tank **138** via a pump **139**. The pump **139** is coupled to the conduit **136** for transporting the liquid reductant solution **134** to the injector **132**, where the liquid reductant is injected into the exhaust gas flow path as a reductant spray (see FIG. **4**, for example).

The conduit **136** includes a filter **135** configured to remove unwanted particulates from the reductant solution traveling through the conduit **136** to the injector **132**. The pump **139** includes a pick-up tube **140** extending towards a bottom of the storage tank **138**. The pick-up tube **140** includes an inlet **141** configured to receive reductant solution from the storage tank **138**.

The reductant injection system **130** further includes a pressure sensor **142**. Controller **195** is also included in vehicle **160**. The controller **195** may be configured to control a number of components such as the injector **132** and pump **139**. For example, the controller **195** may be configured initiate injection of reductant into the mixing system **110** from injector **132** for a specified duration at a specified time responsive to operating parameters.

FIG. **2** shows a perspective view of an example mixing system **110**. The mixing system **110** includes a housing **200** defining a boundary of a mixing conduit **202**. Housing **200** includes an inner wall interfacing with various components, as will be described. The housing **200** may be constructed out of a suitable material such as a metal (e.g., steel, aluminum), a polymeric material, etc. The housing **200** includes an expansion section **210**. Thus, the cross-sectional area spanning the housing **200** perpendicular to the central axis **250** of mixing system **110** increases in a downstream direction in the expansion section **210**. Thus, the outlet of the expansion section **210** has a larger cross-sectional area than the cross-sectional area of the inlet of the expansion section. As a result, the expansion section **210** may decrease the speed of the exhaust gas as well as increase the turbulence. The central axis **250** extending from the expansion section **210** to the helical mixing element **222**, discussed in greater detail herein, is substantially straight in the depicted example. However, the central axis **250** may have other geometries in other examples. The mixing system **110** includes an inlet **204** in fluidic communication with at least one cylinder in the engine **150**, shown in FIG. **1**.

The mixing system **110** further includes an outlet **206** in fluidic communication with catalyst **106**, shown in FIG. **1**. The mixing system **110** further includes a reductant diverter **212** positioned in the expansion section **210**. The diverter **212** includes a planar external surface **213** in the depicted example. However, other geometries have been contemplated. Furthermore, the reductant diverter **212** is coupled to a portion of the housing in the expansion section **210** as well as positioned within the housing **200**. The reducant diverter may be positioned upstream of a nozzle (not shown) of the injector **132**, shown in FIG. **1**. An injector mount **214** is coupled to an exterior surface of the housing **200** in the expansion section **210** and may be configured to receive the injector **132**, shown in FIG. **1**. Specifically, a nozzle of the injector **132** may extend into the mixing conduit **202**. The injector mount **214** may be attached to the housing **200** via a suitable technique such as welding, bolting, etc. The diverter **212** increases the turbulence of the exhaust gas and the reductant spray from injector **132**, to promote mixing. Further, the flow motion created by the diverter, in combination with the expansion region, better prepares the incoming flow for interaction with the reductant spray and an atomizer **216** so that the gasses can then be rotated via the double helix mixing element **222**. As a result, operation of the downstream catalyst may be improved.

As shown in FIG. **2**, the mixing system **110** includes the atomizer **216** positioned within the housing **200**. Specifically, the atomizer **216** is positioned at an outlet termination of the expansion section **210**, the outlet larger than an inlet of the expansion section. The atomizer **216** may be configured to decrease the size of the reductant vapor particles traveling through the mixing system **110**. As a result, operation of the downstream catalyst may be improved. The atomizer is positioned downstream of the diverter **212** in the depicted example. The atomizer **216** includes two support extensions **260** fully spanning the housing **200**, in that extensions form a chord of the circular cross-section of the exhaust housing **200** on each side of the atomizer. The free space on the sides of the atomizer is in some respects a result of the improved manufacturability of the atomizer using the side supports, in that the atomizer can be self-supporting inside the housing without requiring complex manufacturing, where angled ends of the side supports are in face-sharing contact with the inside wall of the housing **200** via a press-fit. However, an unexpected benefit of the design with the semi-circular sections formed by the chordal position of the support extensions is that the fins (discussed further below) of the atomizer interact with substantially the entire spray from the injector, as little to no spray hits the atomizer to the outsides of the support extensions. In this way, the spaces outside the support extensions can be relatively unencumbered with fins, thus reducing backpressure and flow resistance of the mixing system, while also improving manufacturability and assembly, along with durability.

Continuing with the atomizer **216**, it further includes fins **220** laterally extending between the support extensions **260**. A lateral axis **290** is provided for reference. The fins **220** are depicted as only partially extending across the mixing conduit **202**. Thus, the fins **220** do not fully span across the housing **200**. Additionally, the fins **220** are curved in a center region in that each fin is formed by bending it from the vertical position downward and forward. The fins are shown vertically aligned, in that each fin is positioned vertically atop the fins below it. Thus, each of the fins **220** is bent from vertical to flat along a lateral direction. However, other fins geometries have been contemplated. Each of the fins **220** also includes reinforcing a rib **262** extending along the fin longitudinally with respect to the exhaust passage. The reinforcing ribs **262** increase the cross-sectional area moment of inertia of a portion of the fins **220**. The reinforcing ribs provide increased structural integrity to the fins **220** as well as increase turbulence in the mixing conduit **202**. The top and bottom external surfaces of the fins **220** are generally parallel to the central axis **250**.

A helical mixing element **222** is also included in the mixing system **110**. The helical mixing element **222** is positioned downstream of the atomizer **216**. However, other arrangements have been contemplated. The helical mixing element **222** is also positioned downstream of the diverter **212** and the expansion section **210**. The helical mixing element **222** is positioned within the housing **200** and configured to increase the turbulence in the exhaust gas and reductant spray passing through the mixing system **110**, thereby improving operation of a downstream catalyst. The helical mixing element **222** may include two or more intertwined helixes, for example forming a double-helix-shaped mixing element. The helical mixing element **222** is fixed in position with regard to the housing **200**. In some examples, the helical mixing element **222** may be press fit into the housing **200**. However, other attachment techniques may be used in other examples.

In the example shown in FIG. **2**, the helical mixing element **222** includes a first helical mixing surface **224** extending axially through a portion of the housing **200**. The helical mixing element further includes a second helical mixing surface **295** that is positioned complementary to the first mixing surface **224**, in that each one rotates through a the same number of degrees around the central axis, but positioned 180 degrees apart, where the second helical mixing surface **295** also extends axially through a portion of the housing **200**. The first helical mixing surface **224** and the second helical mixing surface **295** also face oncoming exhaust flow.

The periphery **226** of the first helical mixing surface **224** and the periphery **227** of the second helical mixing surface **295** are in face sharing contact with the inside wall of housing **200**. Additionally, the first helical mixing surface **224** may be a continuous external surface **228** and the second helical mixing surface **295** also may be a continuous external surface **229**. A pitch **280** between of the first helical mixing surface **224** and of the second helical mixing surface **295** may correspond to one another, even if the pitch varies along the central axis to decrease in a downstream direction (e.g., both helixes may have identical, non-linear, pitches). The pitch **280** is defined as an axial distance between a peripheral points on the helix at the same radial position (e.g., at the top of the housing). In one example, the pitch may include the axial distance between a first peripheral point **296** on the first helical mixing surface **224** and a second peripheral point **297** on the second helical mixing surface **295** having the same radial positioned with regard to the central axis **250**, as indicated by the double-headed line. A decreasing pitch may promote mixing of the reductant spray and the exhaust gas and enable the inlet and outlet cross-sectional areas of the mixer to be different from one another. However, in other examples, the pitch may decrease and then subsequently increase in a downstream direction, or the pitch may be constant.

Additionally, the first helical mixing surface **224** includes a concave groove **282** spirally extending down the surface. The second helical mixing surface **295** also includes a concave groove **283** spirally extending down the surface. The grooves (**282** and **283**) are centrally positioned on each of their respective mixing surfaces. However, other groove positions have been contemplated. In the depicted example, the first helical mixing surface **224** and the second helical mixing surface **295** each have substantially constant thicknesses. However, in other examples, the thicknesses may vary. For example, the thicknesses **284** of the first helical mixing surface **224** and/or the second helical mixing surface **295** may decrease in a downstream direction. Cutting plane **270** defines the cross-section shown in FIGS. **3** and **4**. Cutting plane **272** defines the cross-section shown in FIG. **5**.

FIG. **3** shows a cut-away side view of the mixing system **110** including the housing **200** shown in FIG. **2**. The expansion section **210** is conical in the depicted example. However, other geometries of the expansion section have been contemplated.

The diverter **212** and the injector mount **214** are also shown in FIG. **3**. As discussed above, the injector mount **214** may receive an injector such as reductant injector **132** shown in FIG. **1**. The injector mount **214** is positioned in the expansion section **210** in the depicted example. However, in other examples, the injector mount **214** may be positioned upstream or downstream of the expansion section. A reductant spray **265** is also shown. Specifically, the reductant spray **265** is introduced into the mixing conduit **202** in the expansion section **210** and is aimed partially downstream at an angle relative to central axis **250**. The vertical width of the reductant spray **265**, in combination with the mounting angle, may be selected to not exceed the uppermost fin and the lowermost fin included in the plurality of fins **220**, shown in FIG. **2**. A longitudinal width of the spray, in combination with the mounting angle, may also be selected to not exceed the width of the fins. A vertical axis **380** is provided for reference. In one particular example, the vertical width of the reductant spray **265** may be 40°. However, other spray patterns have been contemplated.

It will be appreciated that the reducant spray **265** includes droplets of a reductant. As shown in FIG. **3**, the central axis **250** of the mixing system **110** is substantially straight. In this way, the compactness of the mixing system **110** may be increased when compared to other exhaust systems which may include curved and extended mixing conduits.

FIG. **3** also shows the helical mixing element **222** including a central shaft **300** from which the mixing surfaces eminate. The central shaft **300** extends along the central axis **250** in the depicted example. However, in other examples the central shaft **300** may have an alternate position and/or orientation. The first helical mixing surface **224** spirals around the central shaft **300** in a helical manner between the inlet and outlet of the mixer. However, the helical mixing element **222** may have other geometries in other examples. As illustrated in FIG. **3**, each of the two helixes rotate through approximately 180 degrees, although the outlet region of each of the first and second external surfaces may continue to rotate but without traversing along the central axis so that the surface ends in a substantially vertical position facing directly upstream. For example, such a shape provides the differential in inlet and outlet cross-sectional areas, as well as non-linearity in pitch in the downstream outlet region of the helical mixer. This can also be seen in FIG. **6**, for example, as well as FIGS. **8**-**9**. Such a geometry enables additional flow speed and rotation upon exiting the mixer and before entering a downstream catalyst, thus improving overall conversion efficiency.

The increase in the cross-sectional area of the expansion section **210** is substantially linear in the depicted example. Specifically, in one example, an angle **350** is formed between the intersection of the central axis **250** of the housing and an axis **352** extending down the inner surface of the expansion section **210**. Additionally, an angle **360** is also formed between intersection of the central axis **250** and an axis **362** parallel to an outer surface of the diverter **212**. Additionally, the diameter **370** of the housing **200** downstream of the expansion section **210** is substantially constant in the depicted example. However, other housing geometries may be used. The first helical mixing surface **224** and the second helical mixing surface **295** are also shown in FIG. **3**.

FIG. **4** shows an expanded view of the diverter **212** and the reductant spray **265**, shown in FIG. **3**. As previously discussed, the reductant spray **265** may be delivered to the mixing conduit **202** via the injector **132**, shown in FIG. **1**. As shown, the diverter **212** directs exhaust gas adjacent to the upstream boundary of the reductant spray **265**. In this way, mixing of the exhaust gas and the reductant spray **265** may be increased in the mixing conduit **202**, thereby improving operation of the catalyst **106**, shown in FIG. **1**. The diversion of exhaust gas into the reductant spray **265** may also assist in reductant evaporation and/or decomposition in the exhaust gas, further improving catalyst operation. Flow channels **400** may be formed between the diverter **212** and the housing **200** to direct the exhaust gas to the upstream boundary of the reductant spray **265**. Flow passages **402** may also be included in the injector mount **214** for directing exhaust gas to the upstream boundary of the reductant spray **265**. The flow channel **400** may be in fluidic communication with a flow passage **402** in the injector mount **214**. Arrows **450** denote the flow of exhaust gas through the flow channels **400** and arrows **452** denote the flow of exhaust gas through the flow passages **402**. The diverter **212** also shields the tip of the injector **132**, shown in FIG. **1**, thereby reducing reductant deposits on the tip of the injector. As shown, the lateral width of the reductant spray **265** does not exceed the width of the fins **220**.

FIG. **5** shows another cross-section of the mixing system **110** of FIG. **2**. The injector mount **214** and the atomizer **216** are depicted, among other features. As shown, the fins **220** laterally extend between the support extensions **260**. The support extensions **260** span the housing **200**. The atomizer **216** may also include cross bars **510** which may increase the stiffness of the atomizer **216** reducing bending of the atomizer **216**. However, in other examples the atomizer **216** may not include cross bars **510**. The atomizer **216** further includes support extensions **514** extending laterally across the housing **200**. The lateral axis **290** is provided for reference.

The atomizer **216** may be welded to the housing at interfaces **512**, or press-fit at interfaces **512**. By maintaining the connection with reduced area contact at interfaces **512**, heat loss to the housing **500** may be reduced.

As shown, the fins **220** are twisted and bent such that a portion of the planar external surfaces of the fins are parallel to the central axis **250**. It will be appreciated that the twisted fins **220** increase the turbulence in the exhaust gas as well as simplify the manufacturing cost when compared to more complex designs. The fins **220** are also curved upward at the connection edges of the supports in an upwardly direction relative to a vertical axis **550**, provided for reference.

It will be appreciated that when the atomizer **216** enables exhaust gas to flow between the support extensions **260** and the housing **200** via openings **520**, the back pressure of the mixing system **110** is reduced, thereby improving engine operation.

FIG. **6** shows an expanded view the helical mixing element **222** shown in FIG. **2**. The first helical mixing surface **224** and the second helical mixing surface **295** are depicted. The helical mixing element **222** also includes a front brace **600** forming a leading edge, and a rear brace **602** forming a trailing edge. The leading edge divides incoming exhaust flow into two flows, one for each of the helixes in the helical mixing element **222**. The helical mixing element **222** is formed by the various walls to generate a hollow body of the mixer.

Arrow **604** denotes the general flow of exhaust gas through the mixing conduit **202**, shown in FIG. **2**. The front brace **600** and the rear brace **602** may extend fully across the mixing conduit **202**, shown in FIG. **2**. The concave groove **282** is also shown in the helical mixing element **222** in FIG. **6**. The helical mixing element **222** shown in FIG. **6** further includes a lip flange **606**. The lip flange **606** enables the helical mixing element **222** to be spot welded or press-fit to the housing **200**, shown in FIG. **2**. However, other attachment techniques of the helical mixing element to the housing have been contemplated.

FIG. **7** shows another example of helical mixing element **222** having a second concave groove **700**, but otherwise having a similar geometry. The second concave groove **700** is similar to the first concave groove **282** in the first helical mixing surface **224**, but positioned further away from the central axis. Specifically, lines tangent to the curve of the concave grooves (**282** and **700**) may be substantially parallel. The concave grooves (**282** and **700**) increase the stiffness of the helical mixing element **222**. It will be appreciated that the second helical mixing surface **295** may also include similar grooves.

FIGS. **8** and **9** show additional views of the helical mixing element **222**. Specifically, FIG. **8** shows the front brace **600** of the helical mixing element **222** as well as the first mixing surface **224** and the second mixing surface **295**. On the other hand, FIG. **9** shows the rear brace **602** of the helical mixing element **222** as well as the first mixing surface **224** and the second mixing surface **295**. The upstream pitch **800** at the inlet of the helical mixing element **222**, shown in FIG. **8**, is greater than the downstream pitch **900** at the outlet of the helical mixing element, shown in FIG. **9**. Thus, the pitch of the helical mixing element **222** decreases in a downstream direction, thereby increasing the flow velocity of the exhaust gas flowing through the helical mixing element. As a result, mixing is further promoted in the helical mixing element **222**. It will be appreciated that the double helix in the helical mixing element **222** has a smaller outlet cross-sectional area **802**, shown in FIG. **8**, than inlet cross-sectional area **902**, shown in FIG. **9**, due to the decrease in pitch.

FIG. **10** shows a method for operation of an emission system. Method **1000** may be implemented by systems and components described above with regard to FIGS. **1-9** and **11** or may be implemented by other suitable systems and components.

At **1002** the method includes injecting a reductant spray into a mixing conduit upstream of an atomizer positioned in a housing of the mixing conduit, the atomizer including fin openings between laterally traversing fins and vertical side supports and side openings between each of the vertical side supports and the housing, the atomizer upstream of a double-helix-shaped mixing element. In some examples, the reductant may be sprayed into the exhaust conduit downstream of a reductant diverter extending into the conduit upstream of the injector mount.

At **1004** the method includes flowing the reductant spray and exhaust gas through the atomizer and the double-helix-shaped mixing element and at **1006** the method includes flowing the reductant spray and exhaust gas from the double-helix-shaped mixing element to an emission control device. As discussed above the reductant may be sprayed into the exhaust conduit upstream of a reductant diverter extending into the conduit upstream of the injector mount and the reductant may be sprayed into an expansion section in the mixing conduit.

FIG. **11** shows another view of the helical mixing element **222**. The first helical mixing surface **224** and the second helical mixing surface **295** of the helical mixing element **222** are depicted in FIG. **11**. As shown, the first helical mixing surface **224** extends from a first side **1100** of the front brace **600**. On the other hand, the second helical mixing surface **295** extends from a second, opposite, side **1102** of the front brace **600**, but with both surfaces positioned and shaped to rotate incoming flow in the same direction. As previously discussed, the pitch between the first helical mixing surface **224** and the second helical mixing surface **295** may decrease in a downstream direction, for example at the outlet exit, where the pitch is constant for approximately 180 degrees of rotation for each of the surfaces, but then decreases for a remaining 100 degrees of rotation. The groove **282** in the first helical mixing surface **224** and the groove **283** in the second helical mixing surface **295** are also depicted.

This concludes the description. The reading of it by those skilled in the art would bring to mind many alterations and modifications without departing from the spirit and the scope of the description. For example, single cylinder, I2, I3, I4, I5, V6, V8, V10, V12 and V16 engines operating in natural gas, gasoline, diesel, or alternative fuel configurations could use the present description to advantage.

The invention claimed is:

1. A mixing system, comprising:

a housing defining a boundary of a mixing conduit including an expansion section with an injector mount;

a reductant diverter extending into the mixing conduit upstream of the injector mount in the expansion section;

an atomizer with openings positioned in the housing; and

a helical mixing element positioned in the housing, where the helical mixing element includes a first helical mixing surface and a second helical mixing surface, each of the surfaces spirally extending axially through a portion of the housing, a pitch between the first and second helical mixing surfaces decreasing in a downstream direction.

2. The mixing system of claim **1**, where a periphery of the first and second helical mixing surfaces are each in face sharing contact with a portion of the housing and each includes a continuous external surface.

3. The mixing system of claim **1**, where at least one of the first and second helical mixing surfaces includes a concave groove spirally extending down the surface.

4. The mixing system of claim **1**, where the helical mixing element is press fit into the housing, and where the atomizer is positioned downstream of the expansion section.

5. The mixing system of claim **1** where the helical mixing element includes a double helix with a smaller outlet cross-sectional area than an inlet cross-sectional area.

6. The mixing system of claim **5**, where the helical mixing element is positioned downstream of the atomizer, the helical mixing element include a leading front brace having a leading edge dividing incoming flow into two flows, one for each of the helixes.

7. The mixing system of claim **1**, where the atomizer includes fins extending between a first and a second support extension without fully spanning across the housing, the atomizer positioned at an outlet termination of the expansion section, the outlet termination larger than an inlet of the expansion section.

8. The mixing system of claim **7**, where the fins are curved in a downstream direction.

9. The mixing system of claim **7**, wherein the helical mixing element is positioned downstream of the atomizer.

10. The mixing system of claim **7**, where the fins are aligned and parallel with one another.

11. A method for operation of an emission system comprising:

injecting a reductant spray into a mixing conduit upstream of an atomizer positioned in a housing of the mixing conduit, the atomizer including fin openings between laterally traversing fins, each fin twisted and bent from vertical to longitudinal along a lateral direction to project downward, and vertical side supports and side openings between each of the vertical side supports and the housing, the atomizer upstream of a double-helix-shaped mixing element, each fin curved at opposite connection edges of the side supports in an upwardly direction relative to the vertical side supports.

12. The method of claim **11**, further comprising flowing the reductant spray and exhaust gas through the atomizer and the double-helix-shaped mixing element and flowing the reductant spray and exhaust gas from the double-helix-shaped mixing element to an emission control device.

13. The method of claim **11**, where the reductant is sprayed into an expansion section in the mixing conduit.

14. The method of claim **11**, where the reductant is sprayed into the mixing conduit downstream of a reductant diverter extending into the mixing conduit upstream of an injector mount.

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